


Aubade



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AUBADE

Mary Washington College
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Cover design by Robb Kneebone

Au•bade /o-bad/ n [Fr.] 1. a song or poem greeting the dawn 2a: a morning love song b: a song or poem of lovers parting at dawn 3: morning music.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

The Waking

I know, and waken
As much to this feeling
As to the muffled call of the wooden floor
Above me. It is mother,
Who has begun the midnight
Ritual. She is always roused from sleep first,
Perhaps age opens her
Eyes before mine,
But I sense an opening myself—
A reminder of a wound—
Long before I fasten my robe
And climb the stairs to join her.

My ascent is slow, I am moving
Despite myself, drawn instinctively.
This is a ceremony
I've made before,
To the altar, in black and white—
My sleeping sister—
Up towards all that I, and my mother
Before me, have now lost.

Mother appears veiled in the thin light,
But it is just the haze of repetition
Which clouds my eyes. I go to her
And sit at her feet, leaning
Against the white folds of her
Nightgown. And we sit together, talking
Only once in a while, waiting
For the cry of the baby.

Lisa Kilczewski

“Spenserian Sonnet”

No preconception, simply innocence.
No malice, only moonlight shining flesh—
Then with a cry, the muscles gath’ring tense
to strike against the bare and begging flesh.
In depths pulled down, entangled with mesh;
a drowning frenzy, waves upon the shore.
Shalt be a crucifix or lowly crèche?
A death by Love or birth by Hate? But more—
‘Twas simple, not intended to implore,
but brought about a thund’ring rage let loose.
In silent shadow, words to stain the core,
a careful hand that slow slips on the noose,
a darkness-shrouded kiss, a poisoned dart,
his bloodless touch—a killing of the heart.

Pamela A. Morrow



“Untitled”
Linoleum Block

Suzanne Moe

Fusion

Before you there was no one
except the others.

We grappled.

They fought for me
and bled for me,
while I coolly ordered vodka
and quoted Ginsberg
through my nose.

When they kissed me,
I was counting syllables.
Then there was you.

You held my body
like a sea-shell,
turning me over and over
in your hands,
liking what you saw.
You tore down my pedestal,
weighed me like a bag of apples,
and then put me down beside you
as if I belonged there.
Suddenly I did.

Later when you leave me,
I might wake up—
shivering,
tear-stained.
But I'll make it,
pulling the past around me
like an old quilt,
remembering those times
when there was music
and poetry
and the hardness between us
was ours alone.
It was all so easy then.
Then
There was you.

Anne-Marie Williamson



"Untitled"
Photo

Robb Kneebone

Bonfire/Compost

Bonfire

I burn the twigs
At season's end—
Limbs pruned from trees—
Dried stalks of dock weed,
Withered marigold and zinnia,
And often the previous Christmas
Tree in its decayed entirety.
It is against the law.
I stand in my enclosed yard
Hose ready to quench
The potential holocaust,
And carefully build my fire
Stick by stick
To keep the wet grass and leaves
From signalling my crime
To my law-abiding neighbors.
Inevitably the local sirens
Sound, and paralyzed
I wait for fire squad and police
To surround and punish me.
They never come.
Perhaps it is justice.
Yet every season I am urged
To recommit to ash and earth
What grew from it.
There is satisfaction in witnessing
The shifting orange of flame transform
The rigid, brown, angular pile
Of useless, worn-out brush
To mounded, monochrome ash.
I guess cremation's similar.

Bonfires are celebrations.
I watch the flames devour
The relics of strength and beauty—
Feel the physics of the event—
My face bathed by the unharnessed energy.
The calm, cold ash, I carefully
Gather and add to the compost pile—
The link to next year's bonfire.

Compost

Hidden behind a screen of Virginia Creeper,
A jumbled mound of rotting leaves, sticks,
Grass, dung, and ash
Heats, steams, and stinks its way
Through the summer months.
Hardly an attraction—still
It draws me to poke and pry
Periodically revealing sow bug,
Earthworm, centipede and sometimes rat.
The compulsion of decay,
Steady, slow, and inexorable—
Builds by undoing.
I don't know much of science,
But I understand the force that
Shapes and changes me,
And as I crumble
Through my open fingers
What was once a petal of rose,
Or branch of cherry tree—
An egg or cabbage leaf—
A melon rind or young dead bird—
I am connected to a power
Patterned to destroy and
Build, burning to earth and ash
Before blooming into beauty.

Donald E. Glover



“Untitled”
Etching with aquatint

Lee Robertson

MUST REMEMBER TO GET THAT THING FIXED

Here he is agayn,
stealing around with a wrench,
a light step, and a lit Marlboro.

I thought I had gotten
rid of him, but I can feel
he's here now, making adjustments.

Tiptaptap. He's so good at this!
I always forget to be cautious
about the plumbing.

Yyp, he's dancing now,
sloshing through the warm puddles—
he knows he's going to win.

"Just think of all the good times"
he gushes over coffee.
I force myself to think of the bad.

No mistakes this time, dammit!
Why does he insist upon trying to

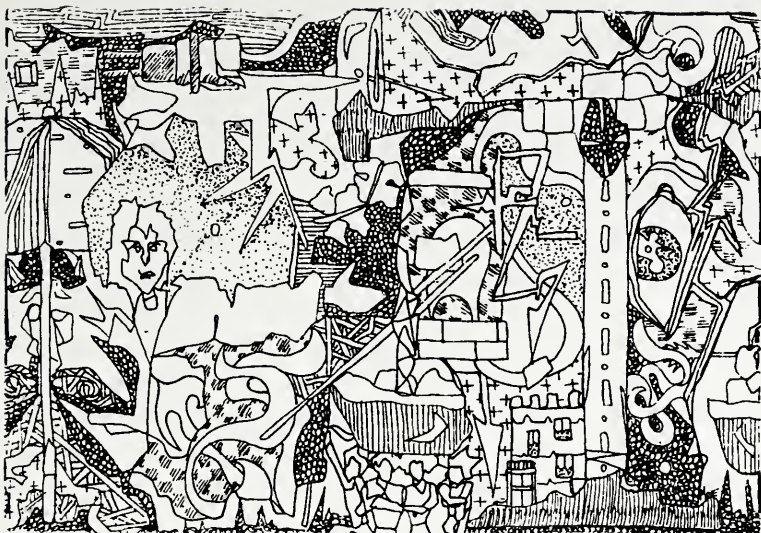
save me, like I need to have
a truth-compass implanted by him;
the plumber of my electron sink.

A. Cobbett

Corsage

The five red roses poked
their tiny fragrant faces
out,
damp lips parting,
supple tongues beckoning,
trembling silently amidst the baby's
breath, not
breathing, the deep red
deepening, features swelling;
they choke, strangled
by the lacy ribbons—
their petals crumble,
peal like dead skin,
the crusted membranes shed,
and the faces
fall,
swallowed by the ribbon:
dried blood
in a mouth of lace.

KA Johnson



"Untitled"
Linoleum Block

Suzanne Moe

Moonlight Sonata

The sun dances
—No
...Rather it sings a song
Upon the crystal vase,
Creating a melody
Sung by flowers,
A choir
Draped in scarlet robes
The melody Potent and Enticing

The Sun falls far below the Horizon,
And the Moon and Stars
Slip quietly in and
Take Lights place,
Shedding their own gentle light
Upon the crystal vase,
Giving birth to a melody
So powerful in its
Softness
To be sung by the Roses
In a room of darkness.

Tina Barnes

Train Homeward

by Kenneth J. Brady

I hate wearing underwear. I hate wearing ties, they choke the hell out me and I feel like a damn ad for IBM or something. I've got to go home for the weekend, it's my dad's funeral and no matter how much I hate funerals, and man I hate funerals, I need to go home and see my dad.

I'm worried about my Aunt Tessie. She cared a lot about dad, I'm sure she's taking it hard. You see, when my mom died, I was too young to remember it, my Aunt Tessie, who wasn't married or anything, moved in with us to help out. She has been kind of my surrogate mother ever since. That was sixteen years ago. I was three. My older brother Joey went to my mom's funeral but my little sister Gerry (we call her Gerry, but her real name is Geraldine) was only three months old, so she didn't go.

Anyway, I've got to catch a train home. Not too far away, only two hours from campus, Princeton University. You probably think I'm a serious bookworm type, but I'm not really. I did alright in high school, but I was a wrestling state champion and president of my class. I made a corny speech to get elected, but what the hell, I didn't mind. I was going through a phase where I needed people to notice me, so I palyed Joe Popular, shook some hands, and won the election. Looking back on it, it seemed pretty silly, but I thought it would look good on my college applications. My dad's old college chum was Dean Somebody of Something at Princeton. I can't remember. Dad picked up the phone, told a few jokes, crushed his cigarette in the ash tray, and told me, "Ethan, I think we got you in." I thought to myself, "we"? I never did thank dad, what the hell, I thought I would eventually. I was supposed to stop by to see the Dean and say hi, but I didn't. Maybe I'll see him when I get back.

I was almost late for the train. I took an empty seat next to an old black woman and started reading an issue of Rolling Stone magazine. A rock star was on the cover (pretty original I thought), but I read a good article on teen suicide. It scared the hell out of me, especially now that Gerry is in high school going through that whole adolescence bullshit. I was pretty drained so I kicked back to take a nap, and next thing I knew I was at my stop. Not surprisingly Aunt Tessie was waiting at the station to greet me.

I remember when I was little I played my first Little League baseball game. Tessie came to watch. Dad was away on a business trip or something, but Tess was there screaming in the stands. After the game she bought me some pizza. Damn, that was good pizza. She was nice about when I didn't play so hot. She would say, "Ethan, you know Rome wasn't built in one day, son." Sometimes she called me son. I think she wished she had a son so she could go see his games.

On the way home we didn't say a word until we drove past the toll booth. Finally I said, "School's going okay, the classes are really hard though." I

figured I'd exaggerated a little. Aunt Tessie didn't say a word. She just looked at me and started to bawl her eyes out. When I saw that, I started crying too. What a mess we were. You should of seen us. All of a sudden we started laughing hysterically. I don't know why, but we couldn't control it. Finally, we turned up into our driveway.

When we got out of the car, I hugged Tessie. She was so comfortable, like an old chair, kind of worn, but comfortable as hell. We walked into the house and I saw the caterers setting up food in the living room. Aunt Tessie told me that there would be guests after the funeral, which was to begin in an hour. Cold cuts. When I die, I hope nobody comes to my house afterwards and eats cold cuts and says things like, "Oh what a lovely floral arrangement." I guess I'm too young to understand things sometimes. I'd much rather have someone ask for a beer than say, "Oh what a lovely floral arrangement."

At the funeral, people that I had never seen before in my life were telling me how close they were to my dad. They kept telling me how tall I was or asked me how it felt to go to Princeton. I felt like saying, "Who cares how goddamn tall I am." Fat ladies with fat arms, slight moustaches and nasty bright red lipstick kept slobbering all over me. They were just trying to be nice, I know, but I was just not ready for this. Hell, I just got off the train an hour ago!

My brother Joey arrived late and obviously had been drinking with his friends beforehand. He tried to play it off really cool-like, but I could tell. Then Joey comes up to me and says, "Ethan, wait 'til you see the spread set up in the living room, three different kinds of cheeses." I couldn't believe it.

I walked up to the open casket, my heart pounding and my palms sweating. Dad didn't look so good, he looked asleep. I was waiting for his eyes to twitch but he'll never wake up. I loved him and he loved me, I know it. Aunt Tessie always told me that Dad loved me, but we never told each other. We always shook hands, shook hands for God's sake. Suddenly I found myself running toward the door. It was probably the wrong thing to do, but I had to get out of there. I ran out of the church, down the street, and caught a bus downtown. I didn't feel like going home, but I didn't feel like going back to school yet either. I stopped into a coffee shop and all of a sudden, the tears began again.

I took a napkin and scribbled, "I love you Daddy" on it. I wanted to put it on his his grave, but I didn't know where it was, so I just addressed it to our house; that way Aunt Tessie would open it and understand. I took a taxi to the station and boarded the next train to school. It seemed like years since I had been on a train, and as soon as I hit my seat, I was asleep.

When I got back to my room, I took out my official Princeton stationary, with the old black and orange, and wrote a letter to Tessie, apologizing and explaining my actions. Dear Aunt Tessie, I love you..."

Going To Kyoto

Pale fingertips
Siphoning snow
Into the silence
Of the heart

Delicate red striations
Bleed slowly away
Along a radious
Of spent sunlight

Evening caresses
Dark streets
Unraveling
In stately
T'ang Dynasty
Precision

City of the moon,
Eighteen gates
Adrift
In floating broken light
From shattered constellations

Black silk sighing
Counterpoint
To sad erotic voices
On winter nights
When women,
privilged yet neglected,
Await their lovers

Flowers gently inked
Into cool skin;
Tides of blood
Receding
As blossoms
Float to the surface

Pearl combs pierce hair
Dense black, impossibly long,
Through quiet centuries

And ladies-in-waiting
Mourn the passing
Of the calligrapher's art

William Saffell

The Party

I sit amidst the merry-go-round
of passing colors.
Laughter snakes up toward the ceiling
strangled by the twisting smoke.

Voices in greeting veil empty hearts.
Words scar like fists.
No mask left unbruised.
The masquerade continues.

Suffocating in the vacuum
my silence is absorbed.
It vibrates into the crystal walls
which do not shatter—even for a scream.

I am alone.

Lisa Marie Ferreira

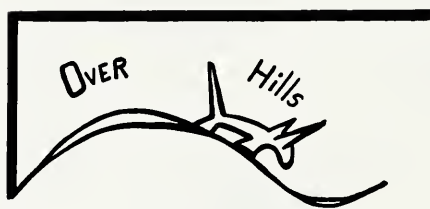


“Untitled”
Pen/Ink

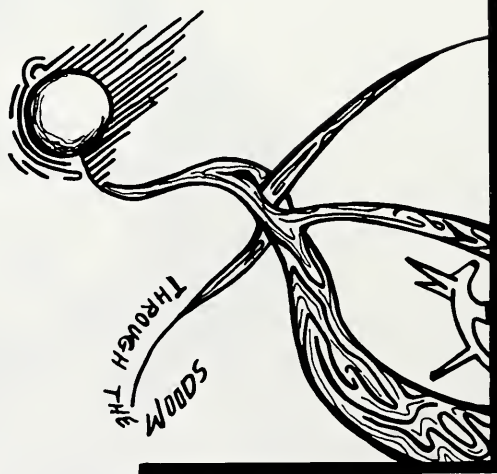

Tiffany Abel

Dog's Day

After thirteen years of life,
He walked off one night
Never to return.
To his whereabouts
Left the boy in such concern,
but the boy's best friend
Just walked and walked and walked...



He WALKED...



He WALKED...

and kept walking until
he reached a tall mountain...



and when he came to a stop
he had reached the very tip-top...

After walking and walking and walking
and climbing and climbing and climbing,
why did he come all this way you say...

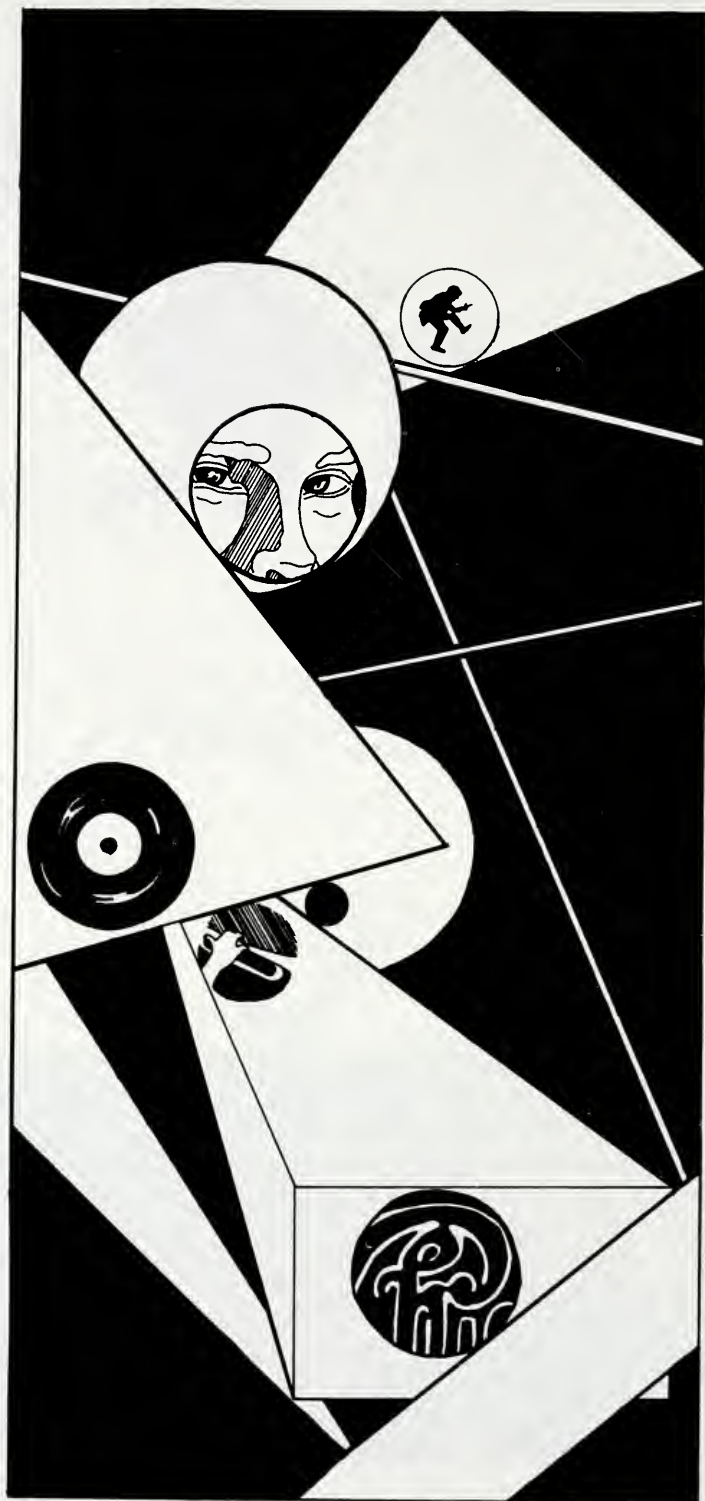
Only to Die.

Gary Colson



"Untitled"
Photo

Robb Kneebone



"A Dream"
Pen/Ink

Kris Brinker

ARS NATURAE/NATURA ARTIS

Nature appeals to Art
As seven geese in chevron flight
Draw the hammered arrowhead.

Art assumes Nature
As the praying mantis
Continues the leafy vine
It consumes.

Art is ancillary to Nature
As the elk's branching antlers are
To the inner wood they barely resemble.

Nature is the dream Art remembers
As a hidden surface where five wild geese
Alight on waves that welcome
The accomplished elk.

Daniel Dervin



“Untitled”
Pen/Ink

Jay Immel

Des reflections grises sur un anniversaire en automne

(Grey Reflections on an Autumn Birthday)

En traversant le campus,
je regarde le ciel, tout gris:
j'ai vingt ans aujourd'hui.

La terre, convertie d'une jonchee des feuilles brun et d'or,
perd sa couverture sous le grondement de la
machine terrible (ou sont les rateaux?) qui
souffle les feuilles du trottoir, en le mettant
a nu.
(Et quand j'étais plus jeune je jouais dans
la jonchee ou je faisais ma maison imaginaire
avec des tas de feuilles.)

Mais le ciel est gris,
les arbres se mettent a nus,
et l'air se refroidit avec
une fraicheur pensive et un peu melancholique.

Mes amis m'entourent avec leurs meilleurs voeux,
et je les recois, toute seule;
je fais une promenade parmi mes pensees;
je m'arrete pour regarder par une fenetre,
en voyant une beaute dormante dans les arbres nus.

J'ai vingt ans.
Je suis jeune, mais aussi vieille.
J'aime le gris pensif, et les feuilles tombees
qui couvrent la terre—et les arbres decouverts.

Moi, je suis comme l'automne.

Dawn L. Benner

The Forest

of my youth looms
before my eyes
and I think about the role
it has played in my life.
Leaves fall around me like the old women
I saw at a revival meeting when I was young.
And they fall like the soldiers
in the movies about Vietman:
their bodies upraised before they gracefully fall
to earth.

I crawl up the mountain
to the tree where I first made love
in my dreams.
My fingers now so old & gnarled,
soften with each stroke
over the bark.
The tree's wrinkled body gathers
skin and times flakes
off as I fall asleep once more.

Janette Breen



“Untitled”
Pen/Ink

Mike Bodi

Maureen

Music from the radio
escapes the kitchen
and finds its way to
Maureen

Her father's voice
travels with Frank Sinatra's
into the living room
as she watches from the window seat
the corner streetlamp
becomes a pearl
and she reaches for it
catching only her father's voice
for memories sake
as he drowns
the songs
in beer

Susan Holt Ripley



"Self Portrait"
Pen/Ink

Kris Brinker

Shattered Windows

by KA Johnson

My little brother is a Marlboro man. I found out yesterday when I walked in on him without knocking. I just forgot to knock. I shouldn't feel bad, though, considering all the times he's walked in on me, but I usually forget. I try to be polite about things. Anyway, he was puffing away on one of those unfiltered things and when he saw me standing there he was about to throw it across the room. He actually made a throwing motion, like he was a baseball pitcher who decided in midthrow he was facing the wrong direction and tried to pitch behind his back. But he didn't let go of the cigarette. He never throws anything away if he thinks he can find some use for it, kind of like my Dad. Drives Mom crazy. As I was saying though, my brother held on to it and tried to look tough and mean, except he only managed to look constipated. His cigarette shook like one of his fingers, extended from his fist.

"W—what do you want?"

I was still standing there with the door open so if Mom had walked by right then he would have been in for it. I let the silence roll over him like a big dog with an itch. Then I cleared my throat and said, "When did you start doing *that*?"

He looked down and slid his foot back, trying to get comfortable. "Awhile ago." He poked a pile of clothes with his toe. "Couple weeks."

I started to feel this very aimed looked in my eyes. Thinking about it now, I must have looked a lot like Mom. "How many a day?"

He seemed surprise by the question because he looked right at me with those cow eyes of his. "Huh?"

"How many a day?"

He poked his clothes again. "I don't know. Maybe about four...or five. I don't know—I don't keep count."

I just stood there with my eyes aimed and shook my head, slow so if the wind was blowing or something you wouldn't have noticed it. "I can't believe it. After everything you said about smoking to Mom. You and Greg were *always* on her case about quitting. And you wouldn't talk to Emmy for weeks when you found out *she* smoked." Emmy and Greg are my older sister and brother. Emmy lives in Connecticut now and Greg's at college. I looked at Simon one last time. "You make me sick."

Before he could whine at me like a baby I walked out to the living room. We don't have stairs. Everything's on one level except the basement and we have a fold-out ladder for that. It's kind of like the fold-away ladders I've seen for people's attics but it goes down. Anyway, I sat down and turned on the TV while Mom clattered around in the kitchen. I decided to go help her out.

"Hi Mom. What's for dinner?"

"Spaghetti."

"Again?"

Mom sighed. She sighs a lot. My Dad mumbles under his breath when he's mad so whenever they argue it sounds like a breeze got caught in the house. I asked Mom if it was going to be the green spaghetti this time.

"No." She paused, bending into the cabinets. She came out with a fistful of straw-colored pasta. "We're having it with red clam sauce."

Oh *yuck*."

"Well hon, it's your father's favorite and he's coming home tonight so I wanted it to be special." It was only the third business trip he'd been on and Mom felt like she had to make a fuss whenever he did something that could 'advance his career' as she put it. I think Mom's a little success-hungry. I guess she doesn't get enough 'opportunities' working part-time at the elementary school—she's just a secretary. Now I noticed the table was set with the good linen and silver. She had candles out too—even though Dad hates them. He likes to see what he's eating.

"Simon started smoking."

Mom didn't say anything for awhile so I almost repeated myself, but then she lit up like she just remembered something and looked straight at me.

"*What?*"

"I just saw him. He smokes about five a day. They're unfiltered too." I heard my brother's sneakers step on to the linoleum—he must have been listening in the hallway, the rat. Mom looked over my head. The shock in her was heating up into anger. She looked aimed.

That's when Dad walked in. He shut the door to the garage behind him and set his little suitcase down. We all stood there for awhile looking at each other until Dad spoke up.

"Have I missed something?" He grinned a little, as if it was too soon to be serious. Mom stopped glaring at Simon and glared at me like it was my fault Dad had come in and stopped a good yell before it had the chance to get started. Then she wiped her face clean like a slate and turned toward Dad, forcing a smile.

"Well I hope you've missed your loving wife and children!"

Dad bought it and smiled for real. "You bet I have!" He spread his arms and walked toward her, like somebody's old uncle would, and they hugged. I could have puked. I didn't turn around but I could feel my brother's eyes eating through my back in big bites. He deserved it though. He's told on me so many times I can't count them. Mom and Dad started talking about the trip and stuff so I went into the livingroom to watch TV again. I looked at my brother but he wasn't looking at me anymore.

* * * * *

At dinner, nobody asked about my day. Mom was still pumping Dad for details on the trip and he looked tired of it. Simon didn't say anything unless he was asked. I didn't say anything and nobody asked me. I would have spoken up a couple times, but Mom seemed to be ignoring me so I kept to myself. I have some pride. No one said anything about cigarettes.

I almost felt sorry for Simon. But he is 15, so he should know better—I

knew better at his age and that was three whole years ago. He'll forgive me though. Maybe if things had gone OK that afternoon I wouldn't have been in such a bad mood and I wouldn't have told on him. I don't know. Sometimes I think things just happen for a reason.

After about a month of dropping hints, I finally got together with my two friends Dory and Linda to go for ice cream after lunch. Linda had wanted to fix Dory and me up with a couple guys she knew and go on triple date, but I didn't like any of the guys she told me about—and even if I had, I just wanted to get together as buddies since it was almost time for school to start and it's never the same once that happens, even though it's our last year and we know about everybody. Dory called our ice cream trip the last rite of summer and I guess that fits. School starts next week.

Dory came by in her little blue Honda—one of those ugly, hunched-up things—and when we picked Linda up we headed for The Deep Freeze. Pretty weird name for an ice cream parlor, but I liked it.

When we got there, Linda grabbed a table and me and Dory ordered for her. I got Rocky Road. I usually get Strawberry Cheesecake Supreme, but they were out of that. I was kind of disappointed, since my tastebuds were all ready for it, but I took what I got without complaining.

Most of what we talked about was how much we'd miss summer when school started and all the people we remembered from last year. Dory said she actually wanted to be back in school. It figures. She's in all those college prep classes and when she's talking she uses words long enough to choke a cat, like she wants to impress us or make us feel bad. Whenever she starts laying it on thick and we're in public, I just raise my hand like I'm hailing a cab and say "Waiter! Dictionary please!" She always gets red and looks at me funny, but it shuts her up.

Linda's in some of those classes with her, but she's cool about it—she doesn't talk like a book. She laughed when I told the joke about the three Polacks and the Ethiopian. It's a funny joke. Dory just kept looking out the window with her lips tight like a lizard's. That made me mad—I hate it when she ignores me, especially when there's no reason for her to.

That's when it started, really. There was a kind of meanness in the air that the fan in The Deep Freeze couldn't blow away. It followed us to the car when we left, and I was beginning to feel like a lightning bug in a jar with no holes. Sitting in the passenger seat up front, I rolled the window down about four inches so I could breathe and the wind wouldn't muss Linda's hair. Then Dory got us lost.

I would have been paying better attention, since I knew the area better than her, but I figured she knew where she was going since she was driving. So I didn't complain when she turned off the main road too soon because I knew there was a shorter way of getting back and I thought she knew it.

I figured there was something wrong when she got this set look on her face, with her eyes flicking around like snakes' tongues, and said, "Do I turn right at the next stop sign or do I go straight?"

I looked around and I had no idea, so I said, "Just keep going straight, the turnoff's down further."

"Are you sure?" Her eyes flicked.

"Yeah!" I said in my surest voice.

We came to the stop sign and Dory just sat there for awhile, even though no cars were coming. I was about to say something when, for no reason I can think of, she suddenly turned left. I asked her what the hell she thought she was doing, but she kept her slit eyes on the road and didn't say a thing.

"Dory, I'm telling you," I told her, "this is the wrong way! I know this place better than you do."

She flicked her little eyes at me again and said, "Don't patronize me."

That really made me mad and didn't try to hide it—she knows it bugs me when she talks like that. "Why don't you just let me out? I could get home faster walking the way *you* drive."

Right then she slammed on the brakes so hard they screeched. An old man walking a German Sheperd and some kids on bikes stared at us. She turned in her seat and look me straight in the eye and said, "Then why don't you get out?"

I was never so angry before in my life—she had no right! I undid the seatbelt and pulled it extra hard so it would stick. Then I got out of the car and slammed the door so hard the window shattered all over the seat and the sidewalk—the pieces fell like a sudden hail, as if they weren't meant to stick together. I really didn't expect that to happen, but I walked away real quick. I don't care. She deserves it. I would have walked around to the other side and slammed her door that hard in her face if I didn't think she'd try to run me over before I got to it. Anyway, *she's* the bitch. She tore out of here so fast you'd think she was racing somebody—left a mark on the road too. I brought my brother back there, after I got home, to show him, but he said he didn't see anything. You have to look for it. It's right next to the pile of glass.

After she left, I cut through the woods where the old guy was walking his dog. It's pretty funny now that I think of it. We were only about three blocks away from my house, even less if you take the path through the woods—I used to play hide and seek there with my brothers when we were little. I just didn't recognize the street because I hadn't been there since I was ten. Being in those woods again brought back a lot of good memories—like playing Kill-the-Guy by the stream with Greg and Simon and getting muddy, and Mom screaming at us when it looked like she wanted to laugh. I miss those times, when it was OK to be a kid.

* * * * *

So now I'm not talking to my friends—or at least not Dory. And my brother probably won't talk to for awhile either. Not that it matters. He'll always be my brother and I can make new friends.

Last night after dinner, I dried dishes while Mom washed. Dad was sprawled on the couch with Sports Illustrated sitting like a tent on his chest. Simon, of course, stayed in his room. Mom said something and I looked up.

"Huh?"

"Is something wrong, honey? You didn't say a thing during dinner. Do you have a fever?" She reached out a wet hand to feel my forehead. I watched the suds bubbles on her elbow pop, gritting my teeth.

"I'm fine."

"Are you sure?" She wiped a drop of water that had come from her hand off the end of my nose. I just looked at her. I couldn't believe she'd bother to ask me now.

"Yeah." Why should I tell her about it? What would I say? 'Well Mom, I just lost two friends and one of them is probably is going to send me a fucking bill for a broken car window'? If she listened to me at all, she'd just end up lecturing me to death anyway.

"What about Simon?" I said.

Mom turned back to the sink and started rubbing a plate, making it squeak. "I'm going to go talk to him in a little while. She paused and then swung me the plate, hitting me with hot soapy water. "I think the next time you discover something about someone, you ought to give them a chance to tell about it themselves."

I felt her eyes on the top of my bent head. I held the white plate in both hands, its edges pressing into the meat of my palm, framing the reflection of my mother's face.

"Do you understand?" She was waiting.

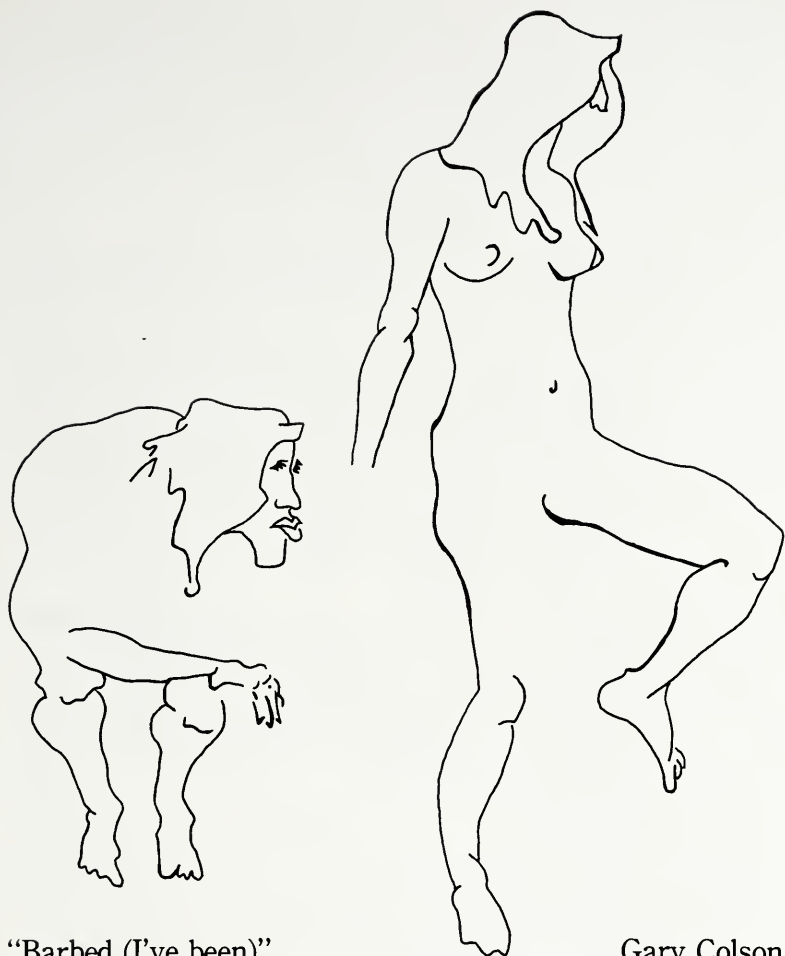
I stared at the plate. "Yeah. I do."



COMPLICES AND SCOTCH

"Cornflakes and Scotch"
Linoleum Block

Suzanne Moe



"Barbed (I've been)"
Pen/Ink

Gary Colson

The Host

By August you could only take
The I.V., the eucharistic wafer
and pineapple on a toothpick.
But I sat on the edge of your bed
Planning the menu for your birthday
From *Ladies Home Journal*,
And when they came to visit, bearing gifts,
I would rouge your face
And hold you up, cradled
In my arms, so when your eyes locked
Inside your head, I could gently
Roll each one back, for them.

Lisa Kilczewski

Home

Sleeper
bumps from
wall to wall
toe bones pop
as she stumbles
—and by the way my dear
beloved i saw Miss Nicole
at Krogers t'night
 (with the curly headed Greek god of RHS)
leopard suited beauty w/ the pill box hat
isolation plainness shame
found me no energy for spoken secrets
and left me defeated,
cowardly sleeping
until dawn

Jenny Spaulding

The Black and White

hangs over my sink.
My mother wears someone's
black wool skirt and gray cashmere sweater.
Her blush is charcoal-colored—
just an ashen shadow on her face.
I run in—look, afraid
she's gone back to Gourin, France.

I think about her
riding to French markets—
on a neighbor's bicycle.
And I wonder if she feels spoiled,
like the old calf's
liver in the woodshed,
by such an opportunity.
I think about her
breathlessly boarding a boat
bound to deliver her—
bound by wires of neatly tied together mirages.

By the dim hall light I see this:
someone's sweater hanging off her shoulder—
(in the picture above my sink)
too big and obviously not her's.

Janette Breen



"Common of the Nile"
Photo

Gary Colson

High Tide

His palms leave
damp patches, shallow
puddles
on her skin—
cool and stagnant, they accumulate,
infiltrate, provoke
a pull and ebb,
recreate the ravaged ocean
of her body, waves
crashing
against a stony shore,
froth thrown high along the getty,
unseen seagulls screaming,
the scent of salt
heavy in the air.

KA Johnson



Photo

Melanie Brown

Transition

Left by itself
my bicycle rests
alone.

Its armor questioned
by rain-washed rust
of Time.

Its crayon days numbered,
recounted in my mind.

I now make my move to
Kafka and Keats,
my days filled
as you number my journal pages.

Marla Miranda Mooney

one night

one

night i
got drunk and

thought
of you.

and
arranged my bottles
to
form your shape.

i
cried

when i spilled
your leg. i

laughed

when i
drank your back.

i had to
dance

when you were gone. the

milky moon
made my feet

so light.

it

was very
late

when i woke
up.

did you feel me?

rolling in your bones?

—*anonymous*

Brazil

I've never been there
but I like the sound—
sharp and green,
filled with mystery.
It looks nice, too
in different print.
Sometimes it's stark and bold
or maybe it swirls,
dancing on the page,
a dark-haired woman at a fiesta.

During the dances,
I am alone and confident
in the bright lights
and calculated actions
of strangers, etched into my memory from travel photos.

Out of the South American night
a man appears in the candlelight
reflections of my dinner table.
He mesmerizes me.
A mole under his eye
promises dangerous excitement
engulfing me
like water over white sand.
And I know my answer
will be yes.

Sometimes I am like Elizabeth Bishop,
in the wild countryside
caressing a black statue of the Madonna,
gathering strength from the smooth
feel of dark stone
and the mixed sounds
of bird laughter blended
with trees whispering
the secrets of twilight.

But most often, I imagine travelling
as a dream that takes
blurred shape and form under darkened lids,
a journey providing a road of escape—
a luxury that loses its
green stamped value
and anxious travel-agent words
through the soulful and lost
wanderings
of fantasy.

Kathleen Henderson

A NUCLEAR FAMILY

by *Kathryn Adams*

When I was in kindergarden, all the kids had to write about their families: "My Daddy is...My Mommy is..." We colored with huge crayons on sheets of manila paper (I thought it was vanilla paper until I tried to taste it).

All the parents came to look at our family stories. My mother couldn't find mine, so she asked the teacher to show her where it was. The teacher led her over to a big piece of paper taped to the wall near the water fountain. "My daddy is a doctor. He operates on people and delivers babies," it read, written in large, awkward scrawl.

Later, at home my mother asked me if I knew it was bad to lie about what Daddy did; to say that he was a doctor when he wasn't.

"Oh, I know it's bad to lie," I said, "but I don't know what Daddy does, and I know what doctors do."

"Alison, your father is a writer," my mother explained, "He writes articles for magazines."

"Well," I said, "I wish he was a doctor."

In elementary school, my best friend Andrea's father was a doctor. They lived in a big house and Andrea had her own room. They went to Florida for spring vacation. I shared a room with my younger brother, Rory, and lay in the sun on the neighbor's garage roof so Andrea and I could compare tans in April. My father was a free-lance writer, and I never knew what to say when Andrea asked me if he was unemployed. "How come he doesn't go to work?"

"I don't know, Andrea. He just doesn't."

I had a dream one night about my father. I dreamed that slammed his neck in a door, and his face turned purple, and he died. I tried to forget the dream, but the image of his bulging, purple face wouldn't vanish. It was scary and I felt guilty for dreaming it.

One night my mother went out to a meeting. While she was gone, I was terrified that she'd get into an accident and die. I paced up and down the house, counting the linoleum squares in the kitchen and praying, "Dear God, please let Mommy come home safe and happy and well, "breathlessly, over and over, until I heard the car. Then I jumped in bed and pretended to be asleep.

My parents fought, and swore behind the door of the bedroom so we wouldn't hear. Rory and I turned the TV up louder and didn't look at each other. My mother started smoking and thought we didn't notice. When I was in the fourth grade, they separated.

"Daddy is going away for a while to work on a book." We watched him carry his trunk down the front stairs.

"I'll see you kiddies in a couple of months," he said cheerfully. He

hugged us good-bye, and quickly left. He didn't say anything to my mother.

The three of us, Mom, Rory and me, went back inside.

"I'll make a tunafish casserole for dinner," Mom said.

"Yuck," said Rory, and made a face. I glared at him.

"Come on, it'll be good," Mom said, "I'll put potato chips on top of it."

"Okay," Rory said.

"How 'bout you Ali?" Mom asked me.

"Whatever," I said. I said it sarcastically, the concept of which I had just learned, and I knew it upset her. I used to hear her ask Dad why he was so sarcastic all the time. I felt terrible a minute later when I saw her face.

That was the first time I'd seen my mother cry. In the middle of making casserole, she went into the bathroom, and we could hear her muffled gasps—huge half-sobbed breathes—as we leaned against the door. I looked at Rory's white, scared face, and felt like I was going to throw up.

I dragged Rory away from the door, and sat him down at the kitchen table. I turned on the radio and made him a glass of chocolate milk. I crumbled the potato chips onto the casserole and put the container in the oven. The Captain and Tenille sang "Love Will Keep Us Together," on the radio, and I checked the casserole every five minutes to make sure it wasn't burning. I used big potholders to take the casserole out of the oven and dished it out onto three plates with a big spoon. It made a squishing noise, like rubber boots in wet mud.

I knocked on the bathroom door and told Mom that dinner was ready. Then I went back to the kitchen and sat down. She came in and sat with us, and the three of us played with our food, not even tasting it. Rory said that he'd rather go and watch TV, and left the table. Mom and I just sat there, looking at each other. I went over and climbed on her lap and hugged her.

"It'll be OK, Mom," I said, not really sure what I meant. I was suprised when she clung to me and said, "Oh baby, I'm sorry, baby You're only nine years old, you're only nine years old..."

Heritage

I lose my fathers voice
as I step in the green fields
of the Northern Texas plains
where the Comanches reign

Crawling on my stomach
I watch with squaws
as warriors circle
proud, rampant buffalos

Red-tipped arrows rip through the heat
sucking blood from black beasts
steam, still rising
dust, still falling

In this October dawn
the buffalos' lives now extinct
I listen to their soul's release
hissing through nostrils

The silent phantom hunters advance
one with my People
we join warriors
with cries of victory

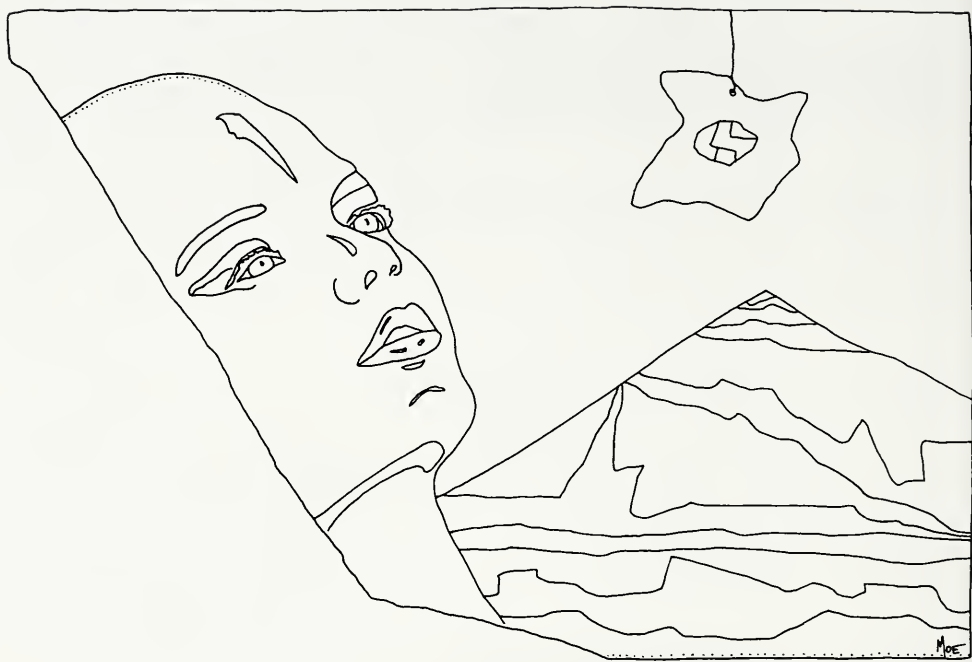
Capturing a stray calf
I straddle it, my knife plunges
into it's warm belly, searching
for the cow's nuturing chunks of milk

Savoring the raw entrails
I leave only the liver
speckled with green bile
from the calf's broken gall bladder

For you, my killing warrior
a delicacy reserved
to nurture your body
for the next Comanche hunt

I return to my father's voice
accounting my ancestry
my brown sugar skin has faded
my People remain a legend

Susan Holt Ripley



Pen/Ink

Suzanne Moe

Straight Lines

(Inspired by the song "Straight Lines" by Suzanne Vega)

She stands on the chair
Hands reaching to the hanging light
And tears away the shade from the bare bright bulb
Casting its glare upon the unfinished room
The wood floor carrying marks of time

She returns to the chair and sits
Studying the empty white walls
Holding the shadows, the mysteries, the answers
Silent. impenetrable barriers
Isolating, protecting, they seal her fate

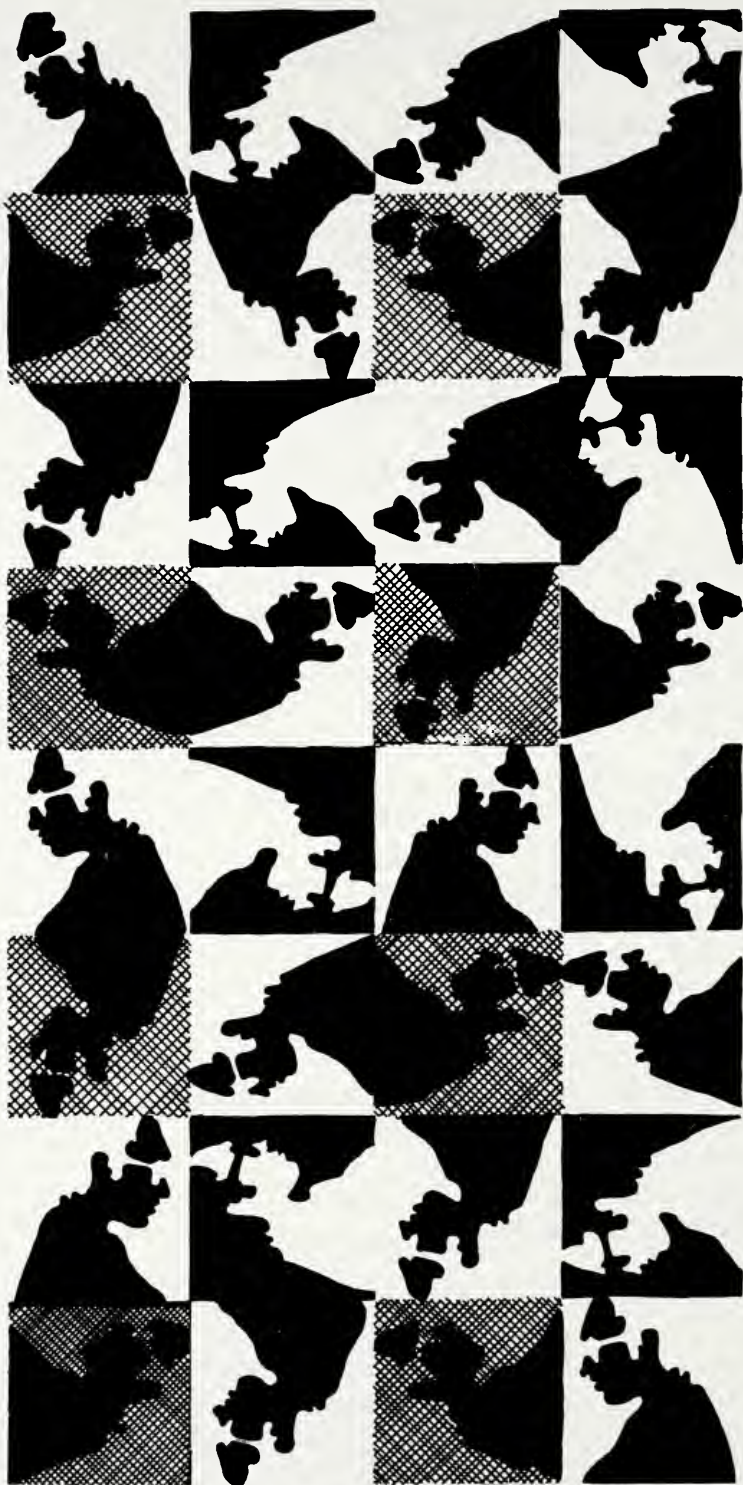
She take the scissor in hand
And begins the task
Shearing the tangle of black hair
Each strand an illusion
The dark pieces scatter on the floor
Forming their own straight lines

She leans back in the chair, eyes closed
Breathing deeply, the task complete
The silence soothes and tortures
She pushes out the thoughts and voices
Stares calmly into the void
The reality, as it is

She sees the straight lines
No more overlapping circles
No more shades of gray, only black and white
No more obsessions and answerless questions
She takes the scissors in hand
And begins the task
Of straightening the lines

"The place I live in
is a kind of maze
and I keep seeking
the exit or the home."
—Anne Sexton, "The Children"

Anne Lewis



"Adam"
Pen/Ink

Kris Brinker

Mrs. Mentor's Antique Shop

by Sonya Armstrong

Mother leans across the back seat handing us watery juice from the styrofoam cooler which sits at her feet. Her hands are damp and white ending in long salmon-colored nails. She scrapes her coarse black hair away from her perpiring face. The sound enters my ears roughly like sand paper rubbing back and forth, back and forth against one of the antiques she is always refinishing.

The car is hot and plastic bags on the floor stick to my ankles. We have been shopping for school clothes at Tots and Teens, a store that always smells of damp carpets and conflicting perfumes.

Mother held me by the hand as we walked past the counters of ribbons and barrettes to the dress racks. She smiled and said, "This is the year of the jumper. I'll choose five, one for each day of the week. And we can get matching ribbons for your braids. You know Sonya, your hairs looks much better pulled away from your face. Here let me fix it."

I can see the dress I hate most sticking out of the bags at my feet. The shirt has a little peter pan collar, puffy short sleeves and lime green and white checks. The jumper is worse: lime green and on the front a green and white checked worm with eyes. The eyes will cause the most embarrassment. Mobile black circles on a background and encased in clear plastic orbs which will bounce like Mexican jumping beans as I walk. I am sure, because of this dress, I will have no friends in the third grade.

* * * * *

Mother is arguing with Father in the front seat. I sit playing tic-tac-toe with my brother and try to ignore the increased volume and hysteria in her voice. She rolls up the windows and leans forward turning on the air.

"Reg, I want to stop at the antique shop. Mrs. Mentor is holding a set of Flo-Blue for me." Father repositions his grip on the steering wheel and without turning his head says, "Rachael, Flo-Blue will probably be there tomorrow and besides, I'll miss happy hour."

Mother turns from father and sits rigid. The tinted windshield turns the left side of her face blue. She clutches the arm-rest, her nails pressing into the black vinyl and I want them to break, to snap. She lowers the sun visor and turns it against the sun which reddens her right cheek. "I'm sure the Flo-Blue will be gone," and she takes out a tissue as the tears begin to mingle with her Maybelline mascara. Father flips the turn signal in defeat and cuts across traffic to the antique shop.

The gravel grinds beneath the tires. We open the car doors disturbing the sleeping dogs. They rise slowly and advance growling. My brother and I stand motionless as they sniff our bare legs, their noses cold and wet on our knees. Mother screams, "Reg, the dogs, get them away from me!"

She leads us into the antique shop with its familiar cramped rooms

smelling of rotting mattresses and dead flowers. Nearly camouflaged among the antiques with her graying hair and brown clothes, Mrs. Mentor appears from behind a wash stand. She pulls my brother and I close and I breathe her smell, the smell of varnish and musty books.

Mrs. Mentor releases us and asks Mother about the family. Mother lifts her chin and smiling answers, "The family's doing well, we're just fine." My brother and I whisper to each other pointing to the bugs mounted resin beneath the glass case and for a moment we moved towards them. Then, from behind, we hear Mother's heels clicking like a metronome. She grasps our wrists fiercely whispering, "Don't touch," and I remember Mother's room decorated straight from Better Homes and Gardens.

Mother stands surrounded by blue and white checked pillows which mimic the comforter that mocks the curtains. The ferns rest in strategic locations upon their white stands and Father's favorite chair and ottoman sit stuffed in the corner.

Mother hates it. Its ivory, orange and brown flowered pattern defeats her goal of the model home, but there is nowhere else to put it. The chair is not to be seen by the guests. But I know this chair. I can feel the rough fibers of the upholstered ottoman chafing my baring stomach.

We find Father hiding in one of Mrs. Mentor's back rooms reading old history books. He stands over a copy of Stonewall Jackson, his mouth slightly open, his fingers poised and delicate on the page. He reminds me of a pianist at rest.

My brother and I tap Father on the back and say, "Dad, will you go with us to look at the bugs, Mom won't let us look at them by ourselves." He smiles absently and removes his glasses to clean them, his blue eyes pale in the light. I watch his strong hands wiping the smudges from the lens, his nails square and white. He holds his glasses up to the light, looking for traces of residue and finding more puts them on to read aloud. He is interrupted by Mrs. Mentor. "Reg, I have a new set of histry books in my car if you'd like to bring them in. And children I have something for you," and she hands us each a box of candy.

She gives us the same thing every time. The box is lime green and red with Japanese letters on it and inside caramel-colored squares with edible rice paper wrappers. The box also has a tiny compartment on one end which holds a plastic toy. I always get a yellow car but Jamie's boxes contain trucks, people and animals.

Father used to bring us the same boxes of candy when lived in Japan. We had a house with a pond in the backyard. I remember this because my brother and I selected ants from its white cement floor and put them in our red plastic wagon with blue wheels. We would walk up the steps where Mother and Father were sitting and cry, "Ants for sale!" Holding hands they would laugh, their heads thrown back. Mother filled the pond (???), she feared we would drown.

This is not what Father remembers. I have asked him over and over

again, "Daddy, don't you remember when Jamie and I used to sell you and Mom ants in Japan?" He always answers "No" and removes his glasses to say "Honey, you know what Daddy's talking about, don't you?"

And I do.

When we were in Japan I was in kindergarden. Mother was braiding my hair for school and it must have been September because I wearing yellow shorts and a pink and yellow striped tank top. Mother was half way through my braid when she called for my brother. "Jamie, come in here." He walked into the living room and said, "Yes ma'am?"

"Jamie, here is your milk money and I want you to buy white milk today. You bought chocolate milk yesterday. I know because while you were at school I had this dream you were buying chocolate milk. Now tell me, I know you bought it."

"No ma'am, I didn't."

"Jamie, you're lying—I want to hear say, 'Mom, I bought chocolate milk.' "

"I'm not lying. I bought white milk."

Mother was starting to get really angry. She had begun my second braid and with every word she yanked it harder and harder.

"This is the last time Jamie—tell me that you bought chocolate milk."

"But I didn't." He had started to cry and I interrupted.

"Mom, he didn't. I saw him at lunch and he was drinking white milk."

Mother was furious, she let go of my hair and shook me.

"Sonya, are calling me a liar? I know he bought chocolate milk!"

"No ma'am, but he didn't buy chocolate milk."

"Yes you are. You are calling me a liar."

I tried to back up but she grabbed my arm. One braid swung wildly and the other half had come out and hung in my face. She jerked my head back and put her face close to mine. "Apologize right now!" But I never got the chance because she started screaming. All the blood had rushed to her face and she kept hitting her knees with her fists saying, "I'm not a liar, I'm not a liar."

My brother and I stood holding hands as she fell to the floor. Her hands looked arthritic and her knees were pulled up to her chest. Her head moved wildly from side to side and she chanted over and over, "The evil, the evil." I was crying "Mother, stop, please stop." My little brother kept repeating "Sonya what's wrong with Mommy? What's happening to Mommy?" I said, "Jamie, I don't know. I think its the medication she takes for her headaches."

I went to Father who sat at the kitchen table sorting his golf tees. He patted me on the head, "Honey, one day things will be different" and he retired to his room leaving us crying over Mother. Mother who was now trying to dress herself. Her robe had fallen open and as I kneeled down to help, she said "Honey, dress Mommy, Mommy's fingers won't move."

“Mommy—is it the medicine?”

“No, oh no—Mommy’s not well honey—it is an evil spirit within me that tries to come out and I try to hold it back but I can’t.” And I hugged her when she said “Mommy’s so sorry. It won’t happen again.” But it has and now when she comes to me I stand rigid and removed.

* * * * *

Mother is still talking with Mrs. Mentor. She is clutching her neck with one hand while the other moves back and forth as she tells Mrs. Mentor “You can’t understand. I try so hard to please Reg and the children. You know, Reg is an Officer and I must keep the house clean and well-decorated. I have to give parties to advance his career. Elaborate parties with little green olives baked in cheese and expensive liquor selection. I never serve potato chips. And the children—I must dress them—well I have to think of what the other Mothers will say about their outfits. You know, children are a reflection of their Mother. And their lunches—it’s almost like giving a party—cream cheese and pineapple on pumpernickel, little carrot sticks, an apple and of course homemade cookies.”

My brother and I walk in and smile at Mrs. Mentor who says “Children, it has been such a pleasure to see you. You are so well behaved.” Mother turns to leave and exclaims “Oh Catherine, I almost forgot. Reg just made Lt. Colonel.” She is so proud in her linen suit. Her red smile sears the gloom and she exits in a stream of White Shoulders.

The brown wrapper of Mother’s plates startles the silence of late afternoon as we enter the silver Pontiac. Another Flo-Blue purchase made.



"Modern Day Medusa"
Pen/Ink

LA Patterson

Black August

Kept awake all night
By the sound
Of doors being closed,

Illuminated only
By the dismaying revelation
That I know a little bit
About a lot of things,
And a great deal
About some few obscure topics:
B-movies, bar-girls,
and 900 years of Japanese music,

My life flowing
In places
People tend to reject

Yet,
Like frost, floods, or passion,
It can not be helped,
And at any rate
Does not appear to matter,

While I know that
The long river of night
Runs quite near your door
With a soothing sense
Of constancy,

Like sunrise,
Like sadness,
Like the desert
At low tide.

William Saffell

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